

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 037664 TOSEC 040003

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY: S/ S-O: D MACK

APPROVED BY: S/S-O D. MACK

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O P 161830Z FEB 76 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY AIRCRAFT IMMEDIATE

INFO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 037664 TOSEC 040003

NODIS

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM PARIS DTD 16 FEB 1976 QTE

S E C R E T PARIS 04652

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E. O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, AO, US, FR

SUBJECT: FRANCE PLANS TO RECOGNIZE MPLA

REF: SECTO 03022

SUMMARY: SAUVAGNARGUES RECEIVED ME AT NOON FEBRUARY
16 FOR REVIEW OF ANGOLA SITUATION. I ARGUED THAT IT
IS IMPORTANT THAT WE NOT GIVE UP OUR TRUMP OF DIPLO-
MATIC RECOGNITION PRECIPITOUSLY BEFORE SEEKING TO
EXERCISE MAXIMUM LEVERAGE ON MPLA. AT LEAST WE SHOULD
WAIT A MINIMUM TIME TO DEVELOP A JOINT APPROACH TO
THE PROBLEM OF THE SOVIET-CUBAN PRESENCE.

SAUVAGNARGUES AGREED THAT OUR OBJECTIVE IN ANGOLA IS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 037664 TOSEC 040003

THE SAME -- STIMULATE AFRICA'S NATURAL TENDENCY TO

REJECT FOREIGN DOMINATION. BUT SAUVAGNARGUES DISAGREED WITH OUR ANALYSIS OF HOW TO DO IT. RECOGNITION OF REALITY OF MPLA VICTORY, SAUVAGNARGUES FEELS, GIVES US OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN WORKING WITH MPLA TO ENCOURAGE THEIR TAKING DISTANCE FROM SOVIETS. REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE ONLY KEEPS THE MPLA LOCKED INTO SOVIET-CUBAN EMBRACE. IN ADDITION, GISCARD HAS ALREADY MADE COMMITMENT TO AFRICAN MODERATES THAT FRANCE WILL RECOGNIZE MPLA SO AS NOT TO LEAVE HOUPHOUET AND AHIDJO AMONG OTHERS ALL ALONE AND UNSUPPORTED. SAUVAGNARGUES AGREED THAT WHILE WE DISAGREE ON RECOGNITION TACTICS, WE MUST CONTINUE COORDINATING OUR EFFORTS TO BOLSTER ZAMBIA AND ZAIRE, TO KEEP MODERATES ON OUR SIDE, AND TO ENCOURAGE AFRICAN NATIONALISM AND MODERATION WITHIN THE MPLA. END SUMMARY

1. SAUVAGNARGUES BEGAN BY READING YOUR LETTER (REFTEL). I FOLLOWED THAT UP WITH THE ARGUMENT THAT WE MUST MAINTAIN MAXIMUM PRESSURE ON MPLA BY HOLDING BACK RECOGNITION UNTIL WE CAN PREPARE AN APPROPRIATE PROGRAM OF CONTAINMENT FOR THE ANGOLA AREA. BY CONCEDED RECOGNITION FIRST, WE WEAKEN OUR POSITION AND GIVE THE MPLA EVERY INCENTIVE TO MAINTAIN THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH THE CUBANS. IF WE WITHHOLD RECOGNITION, WE GIVE THE MPLA A REASON TO BEGIN SEPARATING THEMSELVES FROM THE CUBANS AND SOVIETS, AND GIVE THE MODERATE AFRICANS AND EUROPEANS TIME TO WORK OUT A PLAN DESIGNED TO WEAKEN THE SOVIET POSITION.

2. SAUVAGNARGUES REPLIED THAT THE SITUATION IS BOTH DELICATE AND COMPLICATED. LIKE THE USG, FRANCE IS NOT ANXIOUS TO RECOGNIZE A FAIT ACCOMPLI IN ANGOLA. BUT FROM THAT POINT, THE FRENCH ANALYSIS DIFFERS FROM OURS. THE MPLA VICTORY IS A REALITY. WESTERN OPTIONS ARE LIMITED. SUPPORT FOR A GUERILLA WAR IS OUT OF THE QUESTION. IT WOULD ONLY PROLONG THE FIGHTING AND DEEPEN THE SOVIET INVOLVEMENT BY MAINTAINING MPLA DEPENDENCE. ESSENTIALLY, WE HAVE A CHOICE BETWEEN RECOGNIZING THE MPLA FIRST AND BARGAINING AFTERWARD, OR BARGAINING FIRST AND RECOGNIZING AFTERWARD.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 037664 TOSEC 040003

SAUVAGNARGUES SAID THAT IF WE ATTEMPT TO BARGAIN FIRST, WE REALLY DO NOT HAVE THE LEVERAGE WE THINK WE DO. WE WORKED AGAINST THE MPLA, AND THE MPLA KNOWS THAT WE WORKED AGAINST THEM. OUR REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE THE MPLA WILL HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO EFFECT BEYOND DRIVING THEM MORE DEEPLY INTO SOVIET DEPENDENCY.

3. EVEN MORE CENTRAL THAN THE PREVIOUS ARGUMENTS,

SAUVAGNARGUES EMPHASIZED, IS THE POSITION OF THE AFRICAN MODERATES. EARLIER, WE ASKED THE MODERATES TO BE HARD ON THE MPLA, AND THEY RESPONDED POSITIVELY. NOW THE IVORY COAST AND CAMEROON HAVE RECOGNIZED. EVEN MOBUTU TOLD GISCARD IN A RECENT MESSAGE THAT HE HAS NO OBJECTION TO FRANCE RECOGNIZING THE MPLA. ALL MOBUTU ASKS IS A GUARANTEE THAT THE MPLA NOT UNLEASH THE KATANGESE GENDARMES. THE AFRICAN MODERATES SUPPORTED US WHEN WE NEEDED THEM. WE CANNOT LET THEM

DOWN NOW. WE MUST STAY WITH THEM. IN FACT, GISCARD WANTED TO ANNOUNCE RECOGNITION OF THE MPLA ON SATURDAY, BUT AGREED TO CONSULT FIRST WITH THE US, UK AND THE FRG. IN EFFECT, GISCARD HAS MADE A COMMITMENT TO HOUPHOUET TO JOIN IN THE RECOGNITION OF THE MPLA.

4. FINALLY, SAUVAGNARGUES SAID THAT IF THERE IS ANY CHANCE THAT NETO AND THE MODERATES IN THE MPLA WILL DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM THE SOVIETS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE START WORKING TO STIMULATE THIS NATURAL AFRICAN REFLEX RIGHT AWAY. THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE THROUGH RECOGNITION AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MPLA.

5. I TOLD SAUVAGNARGUES THAT IT IS CLEAR WE AGREE ON FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES. WE JUST DIFFER ON THE POTENTIAL EFFECT OF RECOGNITION. I SUGGESTED THAT THE GOF TAKE SOME TIME TO REFLECT AND ALLOW US TIME TO COME UP WITH A BROAD PLAN OF ACTION THAT WOULD PROTECT OUR POSITION WITH OUR AFRICAN FRIENDS.

6. SAUVAGNARGUES THEN ARGUED THAT THE ACT OF RECOGNITION IS NOT ALL THAT SIGNIFICANT. WE MUST SEPARATE THE ACT OF RECOGNITION FROM THE REAL LEVERAGE WE CAN
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 037664 TOSEC 040003

EXERCISE ON THE MPLA WHICH WILL COME FROM THEIR NEED FOR A WESTERN ECONOMIC PRESENCE. I COUNTERED BY POINTING OUT THAT QUICK RECOGNITION WILL ONLY GIVE THE MPLA THE FEELING THEY CAN GET WHAT THEY WANT FROM THE WEST WITHOUT EJECTING THE SOVIETS. SAUVAGNARGUES ARGUED BACK THAT THE USE OF RECOGNITION AS A BARGAINING LEVER HAS NEVER WORKED, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE OBJECT OF THE EXERCISE HAS JUST WON A MILITARY VICTORY TO COME TO POWER. WHEN ANGOLA WAS DISCUSSED BY THE BIG FOUR FOREIGN MINISTERS IN BRUSSELS, SAUVAGNARGUES SAID, A PROLONGED ARMED RESISTANCE WAS EXPECTED. THIS DID NOT COME ABOUT, AND THE ISSUE OF RECOGNITION IS NO LONGER RELEVANT. MOREOVER, GISCARD HAS MADE A COMMITMENT TO HOUPHOUET, AND GOF RECOGNITION REALLY CANNOT WAIT. SAUVAGNARGUES SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE BRAZILIANS

WHO TOLD HIM THAT THE MPLA WILL QUICKLY UNDERSTAND THAT SOVIET ASSISTANCE IS CUMBERSOME, AND WILL BE LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT THROUGH CONTACTS WITH THE WEST.

7. IN CONCLUSION, I ARGUED THAT THE GOF SHOULD GIVE WASHINGTON AT LEAST A WEEK'S LEEWAY TO DEVELOP A PLAN THAT WILL HELP US PURSUE OUR COMMON OBJECTIVE IN ANGOLA. SAUVAGNARGUES SAID HE WOULD TRANSMIT OUR REQUEST AND ARGUMENTS TO GISCARD, BUT DID NOT FEEL THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD REVERSE HIS DECISION. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, HIS COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH THE NEED TO DEVELOP A COORDINATED APPROACH TO AN MPLA-RULED ANGOLA, ESPECIALLY THE REQUIREMENT THAT ZAMBIA AND ZAIRE BE BOLSTERED BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND MILITARILY.

8. COMMENT: I DO NOT SEE MUCH HOPE THAT GISCARD WILL REVERSE HIS DECISION TO RECOGNIZE THE MPLA WITHIN THE NEXT DAY OR SO. APART FROM HIS DISAGREEMENT WITH US ON THE IMPACT OF RECOGNITION, GISCARD'S COMMITMENT TO THE MODERATE AFRICANS IS CRUCIAL TO THIS DECISION. I FEEL, HOWEVER, THAT WE CAN CONTINUE TO WORK CLOSELY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH THE FRENCH ON EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE THE MPLA REGIME TO SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM THE CUBANS AND SOVIETS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PFOR
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE037664
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O: D MACK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760245/aaaabnlp.tel
Line Count: 193
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 MAR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <03 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRANCE PLANS TO RECOGNIZE MPLA
TAGS: AO, US, FR
To: SECRETARY AIRCRAFT SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006